

MARGARET F. BRANCO

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Margaret F. Branco

(1891 -)

Miss Branco, the fifth of twelve children, was born in Honolulu. Her father, Frank F. Branco, a native of Madeira, came to Hawaii in 1878 at the age of thirty. He had committed himself to a two-year contract as a plantation carpenter and was sent to Naalehu. There he met and married Mary Caroline Silva. They moved to Honolulu with their first four children in 1890 and Mr. Branco went to work as a carpenter for Fritz J. Wilhelm, a contractor. Mr. Branco bought property at Thurston and Magazine streets and built the family's home there.

Miss Branco graduated from McKinley High School and from the Territorial Normal School. She started teaching at Waipahu Elementary School and taught for thirty-three years until she retired in 1947.

The Branco family history and way of life is related by Miss Branco who also tells about her teaching career.

Lynda Mair, Interviewer

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INTERVIEW WITH MARGARET F. BRANCO

At her Arcadia apartment, 1434 Punahou Street, Honolulu 96822

Late in 1971

B: Margaret F. Branco

M: Lynda Mair, Interviewer

M: Well, the place to start is with your own background a little bit.

B: I'll put this away. I'm always working on two or three dolls at a time. Right now I'm doing this. (chuckles) Someone gave me this little doll. She's ready for a bath, I see. She needs a robe so I'm making her that. (recorder turned off and on again)

M: Would you give me your full, correct name so I get that straight.

B: My full name?

M: Um hm.

B: I was baptized just Margaret Branco but I wanted a middle initial so I took my father's middle name, Ferreira--F. My signature is Margaret F. Branco. F-E-R-R-E-I-R-A.

M: Okay.

B: But I usually sign my signature just Margaret F. Branco.

M: I see. Were you born here in Hawaii?

B: Yes, I was born in Honolulu up in Pauoa.

M: Oh really?

B: What's that?

M: Pauoa. You mean over by . . .

B: Pauoa district.

M: Yeh, I know where you mean. Okay. Did your parents come here or were they born here too?

B: They came here. Well, they were here when I was born, of course. My mother came here when she was ten years of age.

M: What was your mother's name?

B: Her maiden name?

M: Um hm.

B: Mary Caroline [Silva] Branco.

M: That wouldn't have been her maiden name. Branco wasn't her maiden name.

B: Oh no, her name was Silva. S-I-L-V-A.

M: And your father's name, then, was . . .

B: (chuckles) That's a funny story about that. (laughter)

M: Well, let's hear it. Go ahead.

B: My father was very fair, had blue eyes and light hair, and they called him Branco. That's a Portuguese name. It's not a Portuguese name, it means white. Like you would say, "Hey, Whitey!" or "Hey, Dutchy!" Like my brother. One of my brothers had very, very fair hair and they used to call him Whitey when he was a youngster, and then afterwards they dropped it. So they called him Branco.

M: I see, but his real name wasn't that?

B: No. [In Hawaii, he used the name Frank F. Branco.]

M: What happened to his real name?

B: To tell the truth, I'm not sure about my real name but I have a feeling that it was Ferreira because my father didn't drop the Ferreira. He was a bachelor, you know.

M: When he came?

B: In the Island of Madeira. Funchal, Madeira. They lived right in the city. And he was a bachelor, thirty years of age, and he heard about these immigration ships going to Portugal to get workers for the plantations. And so, he had an adventurous spirit and wanted to come, but his

mother didn't want him to come. So he signed up as Francisco Ferreira Branco and he came here with that name, you see. So then, when he wanted to buy a piece of property, they told him he'd better legalize that name because he might have trouble later on or his children might have trouble claiming the property if he should die suddenly or die at any time. So (chuckles) he legalized it and he bought this piece of property right at the corner of Thurston and Magazine streets and it went all the way up to Spencer Street--200 by 75 [feet]. There were two lots, you see. The lots that were being sold in that district were 75 by 100 [feet]. So then he bought these two lots in that name, so we all took that name.

M: I see. What year, about, did he come? Do you know?

B: He came on the Priscilla. It was September 30, 1878. And my mother came one year after on the Ravenscrag and arrived in Honolulu on August 25, 1879. They were not married. She was just ten years old; he was thirty. The groups of people were sent to different parts of the Islands and he was sent to Naalehu to work on a plantation there.

M: That was immediately after he came.

B: Um hm, after he came. He didn't know what he was headed for. He wanted to see the Sandwich Islands, as these islands were called, and so he came. He registered without his mother's knowing and the day he left he told his mother he was coming to the Sandwich Islands. He left and said goodbye to them. He had a sister there who was taking care of the mother. She was married to a musician by the name of Gonsalves and so the mother lived with them. In fact, they lived with the mother because the mother owned the property in Funchal. And so that's how he got to come to Hawaii.

M: Could you spell the name of that city you just mentioned, because I can't figure it out.

B: F-U-N-C-H-A-L. That's the capital city. Funchal, uh huh. It's on the Island of Madeira. It's still there. I visited it in 1950. I wanted to see where my father and mother lived. My mother didn't live in Funchal, she lived in Machiko. M-A-C-H-I-K-O. That's sort of a fishing village. He [her father] was a grocer. He was a grocery merchant. He had a grocery store.

M: This is your mother's father.

B: That's my mother's father and mother. She had two broth-

ers and two sisters. There were five children in the family. Four of them came from Madeira [to Hawaii] and one girl was born in Hawaii.

M: Hm. What were your grandparents' names, do you know?

B: My grandmother's name was Silva. My mother's mother. My mother was Mary Caroline Silva, so her parents were Silva. Manuel Silva. He married a Caroline Decarmo.

M: Manuel?

B: Uh huh. So that would be my maternal grandfather, you see.

M: And they got here about 1880. [August 25, 1879]

B: So, when my father got here he used to write letters to them. They corresponded up to after my aunt died. No, when my aunt came here. As I told you, it's such a long story that I have to stop and think. (laughter)

M: Well, keep going. (recorder turned off and on again)

B: Is that somebody else's story I was listening to?

M: That's you.

B: Me? Oh! (laughs) Does my voice sound like that?

M: It [the recorder] distorts it a little bit, you know. It doesn't come out sounding really quite the way you do sound.

B: Um hm. Well, as I was trying to get straightened out: my mother's parents came one year after my father had been here. My father didn't know them at all. They weren't acquainted at all, but they happened to have been sent to Naalehu on the Island of Hawaii and there my father met my mother.

M: So both families ended up at Naalehu.

B: Um hm, they were both sent to Naalehu and my father met my mother there. She was only ten years old and I don't know just when he met her. He must have met her when she was in her teens because she was married when she was sixteen and he was thirty-six--twenty years difference. My mother raised a family of twelve children. She had four boys, one after the other every year, so there was one year's difference except for the last boy. He was two years away from the third boy. Then I came along three

years after Charles. George, I mean. Two years after George. There's Frank, William, Charles and George. Then I came along two years after, and almost every two or three years mother had another child. They were Roman Catholics, you see, and they didn't believe in . . .

M: Yeh. (both chuckle)

B: . . . like they do now with the [birth control] pill.

M: Yeh. While we're on it, could you give me the rest of your brothers' and sisters' names after you.

B: Then I had a brother named Alvero--he was drowned at sea--and a sister named Inez; and then another brother named Alwin, then four sisters--Eleanor, Lydia, Alda and Mary Caroline. The last one was named after my mother, Mary Caroline.

M: Does that make twelve now?

B: Twelve. Four, then me, Alvero, Inez. We all called her Agnes and she used to sign herself as Agnes, but her name was really Inez. And Alwin. See, there's four there and then four girls. Three fours are twelve. (chuckles)

M: Wow! Well, what did your father do at the plantation?

B: Well, he had to become a sort of carpenter. They gave him the job where he was a cabinetmaker.

M: Oh, he didn't go out and work in the fields or anything like that.

B: They used to give him all the fancy work, you know, like the doors or the stairways and things like that in the houses that they built. And then they came to Honolulu. But first, my mother's parents came to Waianae and he put up a general store there. I don't know what he did while he was in Naalehu. Probably he worked in the store, because that's all he seemed to do. [See p. 25-26]

I remember now my mother saying that they decided to come from Madeira here when they had this chance to come free of charge around the [Cape] Horn. You know, it took three months. This village where he lived was a rather poor village, it seems, and the people couldn't pay him for the groceries. And when their bills began getting too big, they would give him a necklace. I have a necklace that is about three hundred years old, but I've given it away. I've given all my jewelry. My mother had several long chains and she cut them up and gave each girl a short

chain. That's how he got his bills paid, with this jewelry, and then he got kind of tired of that. They had no more jewelry to pay him I guess. (laughter) That's my supposition. So they decided to come--my grandfather and grandmother and my mother. My mother was the oldest in her family.

They came here and I don't know why they went to Waianae, but that's where they settled. And he put up a general store in Waianae. He used to have not only groceries but dry goods, you know. My mother told me that these two aunts of mine, her sisters that were young, used to do a lot of sewing. They used to want me to go down because they had lots of scraps of material and they would make dresses for me, and I came home one day with eighteen dresses (laughter) after I'd been there a week.

The only thing I remember about my grandfather was that he used to lie down. I was just a child, a baby I guess. I was three years old when he died. He used to take me and lie down--he was kind of plump and fat--and put me on his tummy and shake it. I'd ride the horse's back, you know. I don't know what he sang or what but they used to sing songs to me and all that. I just have a recollection of sitting on this man's stomach when he was lying on the floor. He'd come home from work tired, being in the store all day long till late, and he'd take me in his arms and lie on the floor to relax and I would go sit on his stomach. So I have a little recollection of that, sitting on a man's fat tummy. Well, that's all. (laughs)

M: I want to get one thing straight. Were your parents married before they came back to Honolulu?

B: Yes, they were married in Naalehu. They were in Naalehu quite awhile. They had to serve two years for the plantation that sent the immigration ships to Portugal to pick them up, you see.

M: So when they came to Honolulu, about when would that have been, do you know?

B: Eighteen seventy-eight [1878]. I'm quite sure 1878. Do you ever go to the [Hawaii State] Archives? Maybe you could find out there.

M: No, but I mean when did they come back to Honolulu and settle at Waianae?

B: I think it was shortly after Mother married. Well no, Mother was there [at Naalehu] with four boys. I was the first one that was born in Honolulu. I was born in 1891. It must have been 1889 or something like that because I

think I was the first one born in Honolulu. The other four were born in Naalehu.

M: What did your father do after he came to Honolulu?

B: He became a carpenter and he worked for Wilhelm. Wilhelm had construction. He was a contractor and he used to build houses all around. My father used to do all the fancy work. I remember Judge [Sanford B.] Dole built a house just a block away from where we lived.

M: This was up on Thurston Street.

B: On Thurston, uh huh, but his property was on Green Street. You know Green Street?

M: Um hm.

B: The entrance to his property was on Green Street. He had a great big piece of property all the way up to that hotel that's there now which was Ballentyne's home. My father was one of the Portuguese who did not want to live in Punchbowl. (laughs) I don't know why. So he bought that property and at the time he bought it he said, "Beyond this place I wouldn't take it if they gave it to me," because it was all wild land, you know. I was ten months old when we moved into a little house that he built on that property.

That house just had two bedrooms. I was a baby and I slept in a crib in my mother's bedroom, and then the other bedroom was for the boys, you see. Then he added two more bedrooms. Then he bought a house that belonged to Mr. Wilcox on Thurston Avenue and had it brought--the first four front rooms--over and slapped it up against our house. (laughter) I should show you my family album that I'm working on. I haven't finished it yet.

M: How did they move houses in those days? (Miss Branco leaves the room; recorder is turned off and on again)

B: My father's sister. She came in 1903 and she died in 1935 at the age of ninety-six. And I was the only one of my sisters that was tall and big-boned. Most of my sisters, they're not too short. They're five feet two and five feet three. (they look through the album and Miss Branco identifies her relatives in photographs) And this is my grandmother. She was plump, as I remember her.

When we first moved up to Thurston Avenue, she used to come and spend the day with us every Tuesday. And every Tuesday morning I'd rush with my work that I had--little chores, you know--and I'd run up the street because

she came along Spencer Street.

M: Walking.

B: Walking, uh huh, from where she lived in Punchbowl. She came along Spencer Street. After they came from Waianae they moved to Punchbowl. I'd run to Spencer Street and wait there because every time she came she brought a little bag of candy (laughter) and I wanted to be the first to get at the candy. But she'd always say, "Now, don't take too many. You know you have your brothers and sisters." (still identifying relatives in family album)

These are my uncles. They died. This one, I think, was the younger of the two. He left Honolulu when he was seventeen years of age--adventure; went to California, lived there for quite awhile, then all of a sudden we never heard any more of him and my aunts have tried. . . .

This is our old home. This part of the house was the part that Father bought and slapped up against it so we had four bedrooms added to it. So then we had six bedrooms, and then in the back he built a large kitchen. Oh, I still think of the days when we used to be fourteen at the table.

M: That must have been some cooking project. (Miss Branco laughs) Did your mother have help?

B: Whenever she was pregnant, toward the end my father used to get a woman to come in and help. Otherwise, we kids did most of the work and Mother supervised, you know. That's my oldest brother who's in California in San Leandro now and this is his wife. And this is he when he was a little fellow. My mother never took a picture of me when I was little. We were too poor in those days. This is their son and their son now has five children--one boy and four girls. She's a very fine person and loves to entertain. This is my brother Bill and that's his wife and they have five children. There's only two there, just Billy and Olivia, named after her mother.

There's my brother Bill. He became an electrician. He was superintendent of electricity for the government--city and county--a couple of years.

M: Here in Honolulu?

B: Here in Honolulu. This is the oldest son [William] and his wife. This is Olivia. This is Blanche. This is Inez. They have three girls and they have two boys. Here is Allan and his wife. There are two boys and three girls of my brother's family.

And there's my brother Charles. He married a Danish

girl, Elsie Sorensen. They never had children. He was on in years. He was thirty-six and she was twenty-seven when they were married. He met her in California.

M: And this is you.

B: (laughs) You recognize me? I was, I think, twenty-seven years of age. I used to do all of my own sewing. I sewed for all of my sisters until they got married.

There is my brother Charles and his wife. Wedding picture. They lived in San Leandro in this house and he died in 1955, I think it was, and she's still living there in San Leandro.

M: This is World War I time, huh?

B: Myself, uh huh. I don't look much like that now, do I? After all, I was just twenty-seven.

This is my brother Alvero and he lived to be nineteen and he went on a trip, taking a yacht down of his friend from Honolulu Harbor to Pearl City. They had a country home. This friend was a minister's son and he had borrowed this yacht and he wanted to take it down to his country home in Pearl City.

My oldest brother was supposed to have gone with him but the day came and he couldn't make it. His bosses insisted he had to go to work. It was a Saturday and he wasn't supposed to work but they had some. . . . He worked for James Lyle. They had a--oh, what would you call it?--a marine shop, I think. They took care of boats and mended them and made boats and went out in them. Some job came in and my brother was an apprentice there. He worked after school. So this brother was going with them. He said, "Oh, I know how to do it. I can manage it."

M: This is Alvero.

B: Alvero, uh huh. He and two boys, his friend and the friend's friend, the three of them said they would be able to take it down because they had done quite a bit of sailing. Well, when they got to Keehi Bay [Keehi Lagoon], I think it was, the sea was so rough. My brother was manning the boom of the sail, you know, and this great big wave came and knocked the boom over and knocked him overboard. Wave after wave came. They threw ropes at him and came back and came through and never found him.

M: Never found him?

B: Never found him. They said that that bay was infested with sharks. They think a shark must have taken him. Oh,

what a shock it was. I'll never forget it. These pictures of him, he was nineteen years of age. And this is a friend of his. They palled a lot together. Paul Vivas. He's a nice, good-looking guy.

Then this is my sister Agnes, Inez you know. That's what her name was. She used to baby-sit for this little girl's mother and take care of the little girl and they liked her so much. This is her graduation picture from the eighth grade. And Alwin is here too.

M: What school is this?

B: Kaahumanu [School] on Beretania Street. And this is her grave. She died at the age of nineteen of pleurisy. Our family doctor was away on a vacation and we got a doctor that lived across the street from us, Dr. Howard I think. She developed pleurisy. She got a cold. We thought it was a cold. The doctor came over and he said he thought it was pleurisy. Well, after a couple of days, he said he was going to pump the water out. But she looked so pretty. She doesn't look very pretty there but she was a very lovely, sweet girl; very nice-looking girl. And I would say I was the ugly duckling of the family. (laughter)

M: Oh, I don't think you should.

B: Because they were all so pretty and I wasn't. At least I thought I wasn't then.

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The first thing he did after we got our little home. He [her father] built that first. He got a couple of friends to help him out; they built it themselves. And our back yard was nothing but fruit trees. We had eight avocado trees, about eight mango trees--different kinds of mangoes, mostly common mangoes--and figs. We had a big banana patch in the corner of one yard. Sometimes I think we lived mostly on the fruit for our lunches. Mother baked her own bread and we always had enough bread because she baked two or three times a week, sixteen to twenty loaves at a time. (laughs) She'd make a pot of stew or a big roast, you know, for a family of fourteen. We were fourteen then, you see. My aunt was there. We got along all right. We all lived through it. (laughs)

M: Did you all go to school?

B: We all went to school. Some of my brothers didn't go to high school. They got through eighth grade and they went looking for work and they worked and they helped. They'd

get three dollars a week but they'd give Mother \$1.50 and keep \$1.50. Mother would say, "Yes, give me half and the other half is for you." When I went teaching I got sixty dollars a month, gave her thirty and kept thirty to support myself and practically support my sisters with their clothing.

M: And you're still sewing and everything.

B: Yes. You see, my mother--I don't know why I'm telling you all of this.

M: It's very interesting.

B: (laughs) Well, we had an old-fashioned sewing machine called a Domestic--one of those that you had to pump with your feet, you know?

M: Um hm. Um hm.

B: And especially when she was pregnant. . . . We got so that we began to know when she was going to have another baby. She'd want to sew for us and during the summer we did a lot of sewing for all the children to go to school, you see. And I used to sit on the floor with that bar that worked the pedal and pump and pump and pump because my mother couldn't use her feet. She was afraid of a miscarriage, I guess.

M: Oh, I see, so she wouldn't use her feet.

B: So finally I said, "Mother, teach me how to sew, how to use the machine, then you can pin the pieces together and I'll sew them." So she did. She taught me how to use the machine--the sewing machine. From that time on I was IT. (laughter) It was hard but it was fun. We had the fun of a big family. We never kept a grudge overnight. If we had a fuss or a fight with my brothers--friendly fights--next morning we had to all speak to each other. We came in for breakfast. "Everybody happy?" "Um hm."

M: Did everyone eat breakfast together in the morning?

B: Um hm. We had a great big dining room. When my father bought that house, he made a section added to the back with a good-sized kitchen and a big lanai where we had our meals--our breakfasts and lunches. But dinner, when everybody was home. . . . Sometimes breakfasts and lunches we didn't have together because some had to go to work and some didn't, so we had that lanai in the back for our breakfast. And then we had a great big dining room and we

had a four-feet wide table, dining table, Mother got at a sale at Coyne's. Mr. Coyne was a neighbor of ours--he lived on Magazine Street--and he was so good to Mother. Whenever we had to buy furniture he'd sell it to us half-price most of the time and we used to give them avocados and bananas and mangoes. [Arthur Coyne]

M: Did your folks keep chickens or anything like that too?

B: Yes, we raised chickens and one of my younger brothers raised pigeons and we had squabs for our Sunday dinners.

M: Oh really? You ate them. (laughter)

B: Twelve to fourteen. Oh, we had a great big pigeon house. My father built all the coops and everything. He'd get secondhand lumber from Mr. Wilhelm where he worked. Toward the end he didn't work very much because he developed heart failure. He had a bad heart. He died at the age of sixty-six. My mother lived to be seventy and a half. She was seventy in July and she died in December.

We were a happy family. Sometimes my father drank a little bit too much, you know. He'd go and visit his friends in Punchbowl where they sold liquor in the back of the grocery store. What did they call them? Oh dear.

M: You mean they sold it by the glass like in a bar?

B: Something--it was illegal, you know. [A speak-easy] Then he used to come home tipsy. He used to stay with his friends talking.

M: And he did this in a grocery store? He'd go in the back.

B: Yes, in a grocery store in the back. They have a name for it and, oh dear, I can't think of it. It wasn't a saloon. The saloon was legal. But I don't know just what they used to call it. I just can't think of it. My memory. I'm eighty years old, you know. That's a long time to live. I never thought I'd live to eighty. I thought I'd die like my mother at seventy.

M: You don't look eighty years old.

B: That's what they tell me.

M: You really don't.

B: (laughs) Well, I've tried to live my life as happy as I can. My motto is: do unto others as you would that they should do unto you; and all things work together for good

to them that love God. Romans 8: 28. (laughter) I don't know where Golden Rule is from [Matthew 7: 12] but I've always lived that way and I've had oodles of friends and I've never had any friend that, happy to say, I wouldn't speak to. You know, there are some girls that don't speak to their friends for years. They have a little fuss; they don't speak. But I don't. I've always forgiven and they forgive me I think, because I talk to them and they talk back.

M: I wanted to ask you--was your father strict with the children?

B: Very. He was very strict.

M: Can you give me a story about this?

B: (laughs) If we didn't do what he wanted us to, he'd punish us. One time--I don't want to tell. (laughter) I was twelve years old when my father had a woman come to do the cooking and the laundry. I was just twelve and my father had to send my mother to get my aunt [in Madeira] and she was away for four months. I was supposed to sit there on a chair while this woman was doing the cooking. It was a wood stove we had in those days; we didn't have gas or electricity. At least we didn't. It was a great big wood stove and a big iron pot we made our soups and things like that in. One day Dad came home and the soup was burned and you could taste it. (laughter) We tried to doctor it but it didn't work very well, and so he punished me. He came in the house with a big stick. He had a big piece of lumber. Every time there was a piece of lumber left over he'd bring it home and he'd make use of it somehow or other in making furniture and whatnot. He tried to hit me with this and I ran in the house and the stick got caught in the pantry door and I escaped past him. He said, "You naughty girl!" But I ran into the bedroom and he forgot about it. I think he laughed because he thought it was a pretty good joke on him. (laughter) And so he wasn't mean to us, I can't say that, but he punished us.

My mother used to punish us too once in awhile but really it was just a slap on our hands, you know. But she was the opposite of my father as far as being sweet and generous. She was a lovely person, very religious. Not so much so but she wouldn't let me take a commercial course. I wanted a commercial course when I was in high school but she wouldn't let me.

M: Why? What would be her reason?

B: I had enough brothers to take care of business. She said,

"If you want to go through high school, well, we'll struggle and get you through and then you can go to normal school." "Well, I don't want to be a teacher. I don't want to be a teacher." But I got stuck.

I went to high school. She said, "You can go to high school for two years, then you can stay home and help me." Well, after two years, the second year I enjoyed my sophomore year at high school so much, I . . .

M: Was this McKinley [High School]?

B: McKinley, but it was in Honolulu High School. McKinley High School was called Honolulu High School. It was on Emma Street in a palace that belonged to Queen Emma, I think it was, and then it was made into a school. [It was Princess Ruth's palace.]

M: Yeh.

B: You remember?

M: I don't remember but I've read about it.

B: Were you born here?

M: No, hm um.

B: Where were you born?

M: Oregon.

B: Oregon, huh? Oregon is a nice place. I went there to my niece's in Portland. I liked it but it rained and rained.

M: Yeh, very much.

B: Well anyway, back to--what was I talking about?

M: You were telling me you enjoyed your second year of high school so much.

B: Oh yes. So I asked her to let me go one more year. She said, "All right." So I went, supposedly, one more year and at the end of the year she said, "You might as well go through the senior year and after the senior year, then you go to normal school and become a teacher." I said, "Oh, Mother, no." "You'll like it." So what could I do? Those days we obeyed our mothers, you know. Whatever they said went, and she was so nice and so lovely. So I went through the senior year then I went to normal school. That year it was just one year at [the Territorial] Normal

[School] if you went through high school; or if you went from the eighth grade to the normal school it was four years. That's what I should have done, but I wanted that high school atmosphere and things.

So I became a teacher and I taught school for thirty-three years, thirty-six years in the department, but I took three years off--nervous breakdowns. You see, I knew I didn't want to be a teacher because I knew that I put myself out in anything I do. And then I would put myself out and I would have a nervous breakdown. And so the doctor said, "You can't teach for a year." My sister-in-law said, "Well, come here and stay with me. It won't cost you anything." So I took one year one time and the other year another time and then I took the third year.

I had a principal that I liked very much. The two principals I had, one was my teacher in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades at Kaahumanu [School]. See, Kaahumanu only went as far as the sixth grade. The next year they added the seventh and the next year they added the eighth, so I was there. I went first to a mission school connected with our church up to the fifth grade, then I went to Kaahumanu and entered the sixth grade--sixth, seventh and eighth. And then from there I went to this Honolulu High School for two years. And then they gave up and they opened McKinley High School on Victoria Street, near Thomas Square. You know where the [Honolulu] Art Academy is?

M: Yeh.

B: I graduated from there but they changed the name to McKinley High School when they went there. Then that school was too small so they built the McKinley on King Street. I think they were there about four years. Our class pins were the first pins to have McKinley on them. That was my junior year. And of course, being we were going to a new building, I wanted to go so I asked Mother to let me go for one or two years. I wanted the third year, then she says, "Now you take the fourth year." (laughs)

M: So you ended up being a teacher even though you weren't sure.

B: Well, but I . . . (recorder turned off and on again) In 1945, I was feeling myself getting into another breakdown and I took another year off without pay. At the end of the year, I still didn't feel well enough to come back so I wrote and asked for the second year. And at the end of that year, the department passed a new ruling that if you were fifty-five and had taught thirty years, you could retire. My sisters cut these clippings out of the paper and sent them to me. "Why don't you retire? You've worked

long enough." I had worked thirty-three years. "Why don't you retire instead of going back this year?" So I began thinking.

In the meantime, in 1945 I think it was, I had bought property that my mother had nine years before she died. I said to Mother, "You're struggling with this property. I want to invest so I can save for my old age. I'm going to buy some property outside, but if you will sell me this property--I don't want to take it free, but if you will sell me this property, I'll sell the cottage that I have bought for my brother on the corner and I'll put that money in this property and buy this property off of you so that your last years in life you won't have to struggle."

Oh, she was flabbergasted. She didn't think she should do a thing like that. "We're cheating your brothers and sisters of an inheritance." I said, "They won't get much." There were ten of us then; two had died. My sister and my brother had died. Ten of us then, and the place was only worth about seven thousand dollars at the time. I had spoken to all of my brothers and sisters and I had said what I would like to do--to buy the property. They said, "You shouldn't have to buy it. That's yours now. I give you my share." One after the other kept saying that. I said, "Well, I'm going to give Mother her share." So I bought the property. It wasn't quite seven thousand; six thousand nine hundred.

I had sold my place for thirty-five hundred and I put that in the place and then I took the mortgage over. By that time I was getting about two hundred dollars a month and I gave my mother fifty dollars. We had built a little cottage in the back yard and that was rented for sixty-five dollars a month. And then I gave her fifty dollars a month and that was for her. Anytime that something happened then I would attend to it. I said, "I'll take care of the place--repairs and all that. If I buy the property then I'll do that myself on my salary." And I did. It was a struggle but I did it. I used to do little extra jobs--crocheting, tatting, knitting.

M: You never married?

B: Never married. I had a love affair but it didn't work out so I never married. I was a one-man woman and he married somebody else (laughs), so I never married.

M: What was your church all those years?

B: Well, as I said, my parents and their parents were Roman Catholics. My grandmother never gave up Catholicism, but my father got disgusted with Catholicism because he brought a Bible home. They were not supposed to buy Bibles but he

bought a Bible and I have the remains of it. It's falling to pieces but I hate to give it up entirely. I tried to have it re-bound once but it was just too far gone, and so I just have it wrapped up in aluminum foil. It's down in my locker and I think one of these days I'll burn it or something. If my sisters or brothers want it they can have it, but it's falling apart.

But I can say I learned Portuguese through that Bible and then the Portuguese church that's there. There were so many Portuguese people here that Central Union [Church] decided that they would build a church for the Portuguese people in Punchbowl. You know where Miller Street is? The corner of Miller and Punchbowl [streets]?

M: Um hm.

B: There's a sort of a hotel there. I think it burned down.

M: There isn't a hotel there now.

B: Just recently. Yes, they had a fire there and it burned down recently and then they had the cornerstone. It was in the papers I think last year. It burned down and the secretary, a Mr. Rodrigues who had been one of the secretaries, remembered that there was a cornerstone there when we sold that property and went to Central Union in 1940. He remembered that when they built that church they had this cornerstone and they had the meeting at Central Union, see. [Abel Rodrigues]

In 1940 most of the youngsters couldn't understand Portuguese, couldn't speak Portuguese, and so Central Union--that was our mother church, you see--took us over there. They said, "We have a church big enough to take you all in." Mr. [Horace H.] Leavitt was the minister then. And so they worked it out and we gave up that church and it was sold. It belonged to the Evangelical Board of Missions and so they took the property over and they sold it to somebody and they made a hotel out of that church.

M: What was the name of the church?

B: Portuguese Evangelical Church. Then afterwards we tried a couple of--I forgot to tell you this--English ministers. We had Reverend [T. Markham] Talmadge.

M: This was at the Portuguese church [later Pilgrim Church].

B: Yes. He came from a New England state and he came over and he was there for about five or six years, I think, and then he got a better job in Hilo [at the First Foreign Church] through a friend of his at Central Union. Central

Union gave us only two thousand.

M: I still don't understand, though, how you folks got away from Catholicism.

B: Well, I'll tell you. Just a minute. My father--(laughs) I don't know whether I should tell this story or not. My father's uncle, his mother's brother, became a priest and he had a parish out in the country on Madeira. And whenever he had a few days off he used to come down to Funchal, the city, and stay with my grandmother and my father--that was before my father came to the Sandwich Islands--and every time he came down, my grandmother used to ask him what would he like to have for dinner. She'd like to give him something that he didn't have when he was alone and in his parish, you see.

M: Uh huh.

B: This happened to be Holy Week and he came down on Good Friday and he said, "Oh, I'm dying for a good piece of baked ham." And his sister, my grandmother said, "What? (Lynda laughs) Ham on Good Friday?" He said, "Oh, that's for the ignorant, not educated people" and my father heard that and he got so disgusted with Catholicism because of that incident. So then he never went to church anymore and he got this Bible and he began reading it. And then he came here.

He was married in the Catholic Church because my mother was still a Catholic and all that, but he never went to church. I remember my father going to church when it was for the baptism of one of his children, and I was the last that had been baptized in the Catholic Church. By that time this Portuguese church was built.

M: It wasn't Catholic at all, then.

B: It was a Congregationalist Church. We're called the First Church of Christ, now. That Ecumenical Movement, you know. And so he told my mother to go, so my mother went and she liked it.

M: She did? So she went to that one.

B: Uh huh. She had been a Catholic. In fact, we went to Central Union Church Sunday School, a few of us--the older ones, just my four brothers and I. By the time we were grown, then we went to this Portuguese church because Mother said, "I don't want you to forget Portuguese."

M: And the services were in Portuguese.

B: Uh huh. My mother used to have family prayers every night and she would open this Bible that my father bought and we each had to read a verse or two in Portuguese.

M: And the Bible was in Portuguese.

B: Uh huh. The Bible was in Portuguese. My father had gotten it in Portugal, you see. So she began reading the Bible and then she had family prayers when we'd all read. This was after we got going to this Protestant Church.

M: You had to be able to read in Portuguese, then, as well as speak it.

B: Yes. Well, she used to tell us the words. (laughs) We used to pronounce them in the English way, you know, because we were in school then. And so, that's how we became real Protestants then. I never went to the Catholic Church, although I was baptized in the Catholic Church.

My father and mother argued. My mother wanted me to be named Florence and my father didn't like Florence because Florence in Portuguese is very similar to the name for flour--F-L-O-U-R--and he said, "Uhh! She's not a bag of flour." He didn't want Florence. (laughs) So my mother said, "Oh, we'll let my sister Maggie. You take her and baptize her." She was still a Catholic, you see, and so she took me to the Catholic Church and baptized me. And in the Catholic Church they spelled my name M-A-R-G-A-R-E-T-H-E. I think that's the way the Danish people spell it, or the French or whatever.

Most of us were not registered when we were born. I don't know if they never required that in those days. I was born in the Hawaiian monarchy, you see. So when I wanted to get my social security and all that sort of thing, I found that I was not registered. So they said if I could get two witnesses of my birth that I could be. My brothers ahead of me had gotten their birth certificates that way, so when I went down there my brothers took me to where I was supposed to go. I was already sixty-five, I guess, and I hadn't got a birth certificate. (laughter) And then they said, "These are your brothers?" and I said, "Yes."

M: At the age of sixty-five. (laughter)

B: And they all swore that I was their sister and they were home when I was born and whatnot. In those days they were born in homes, you know; had a midwife.

M: Yeh, I wanted to ask you about the procedure because you must have seen a lot of births, huh? (laughter)

- B: So then I had no trouble getting my birth certificate. That was in 1950 because I was going to take a trip to Europe. I had saved enough money for a trip to Europe and I had always wanted to go to Oberammergau to see the Passion Play. I was sitting at the dinner party that they were having at the church and Mrs. Ross, who was working for International Travel Service. . . . She had been a teacher but she gave up the teaching when her husband died because her husband had . . . [Ruth D. (Mrs. G.M.) Ross]

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

- M: For instance, if you could tell me in more detail about your family and things you did as a family.
- B: Some more family?
- M: Um hm.
- B: I told you about all there is to tell. (laughs)
- M: Well, for instance, when your mother was ready to have a baby, what happened?
- B: Well, the one that I really remember is my youngest sister. I was attending high school. I was a freshman in high school. She was born in February and I was fourteen. I was fifteen in July. She [her mother] became pregnant and, as I say, I did all the sewing after that. I think that Butterick patterns is what taught me how to do sewing, because I got Butterick patterns and I read those things over and over until I had it fixed in my mind and I would cut a dress and make it and it would come out all right. All through high school I made my own clothes and my mother left it to me as soon as I knew how, you see. So, as I say, I dressed all my sisters and made my brothers' shirts too. We made aloha shirts but they didn't call them aloha shirts in those days; they were just plain shirts. But I made many a shirt. And the underwear. We made even our underwear. Mother got flour bags (laughter) and bleached them and we used to crochet little edgings on them. (laughs) Well, that's about all, I guess.
- M: You started off telling me about when your mother had your youngest sister. You got off the track.
- B: (laughs) I was fifteen then. I had to stay home from school for two weeks. First, my father got sick. He fainted in my mother's arms and that brought the child,

you see. She got the pains for birth and we called the doctor, Dr. Moore, and he came to the house and he said, "Oh, it's going to be born pretty soon," and so she was born that night. This was at night, you see. Father was in one bedroom, Mother was in the other, and I was the nurse back and forth. [Dr. William L. Moore]

So I had to stay home from school for two weeks and I explained to the principal that we couldn't afford to get a nurse. Mother was good at nursing so she'd tell me what to do and I would do what she'd tell me to do. My father was so impatient, you know, because he wasn't supposed to get out of bed. We had a little bell. I have that little bell here somewhere. He'd ring that bell every few minutes and every time he'd ask, "How's Mother? Did you take care of Mother? What are you doing?" He wanted to know what I was doing. I wasn't supposed to do anything else but take care of the two of them.

M: Was the baby born, then, and the baby was okay?

B: The baby was born that night in the wee hours of the morning. I heard Mother screaming to high heaven and I awakened and I got up and went to see my father and he told me to keep quiet and not to ask questions. (chuckles) He said, "You go back to bed. That's all right. There's somebody there to take care of her." She screamed an awful lot. It was a terrible birth. I thought sure the child wasn't going to live. She was a tiny thing. I can see my mother nursing her yet. Her little hands were no bigger than my finger, I think. Tiny little hands. She only weighed three pounds and a quarter.

M: And she lived.

B: And she lived. She's a beautiful girl now; beautiful woman. She's had three children--two girls and a boy. They're all married. She married Louis Robello who was working at the [Hawaiian] Telephone Company. He started--of course long before she knew him--as an apprentice and became vice-president of the telephone company and he retired three or four years ago. They have a lovely home in Aina Haina and they're doing very well. The children are all doing nicely. One boy is still in university. He got married but he hadn't finished school, so he's struggling to finish. I think he'll finish next year.

M: What did you do with a baby that small in those days?

B: Mother took care of her. My aunt came to visit Mother almost every other day to see that she was being well-taken care of. She didn't think I could take care of her, I

guess, because I was just fifteen years of age. So she lived through but honestly there were many times when she cried when I'd think, "Oh, Mother." My aunt used to say, "Oh, Lord, take that child away. She'll never amount to anything." But she grew up, she became a teacher. She's the only one of my sisters who wanted to be a teacher. She insisted but I tried to discourage her. (laughter) After she'd taught several years she said to me, "Margaret, I wish I had listened to you. This teaching is so hard on a person." It is, you know. It's very nerve-wracking.

M: Um hm. What did you teach? What grades?

B: Well, I started in the fourth and fifth grades at Waipahu [Elementary School].

M: That was your first school?

B: Uh huh. The first year, I taught fourth and fifth grades. In those days we didn't have cars.

M: How in heck did you get from here to Waipahu every day?

B: I took the bus down to the depot near Aala Park. There was a little train then that used to go as far as Ewa and I'd take that train. I had to be down there at 7:30 in the morning so I'd leave home about six o'clock. The bus took more than half an hour to get down there and I wanted to be sure to get the train, so I'd leave home about six o'clock I guess. I'd get on the train and the train would go as far as Waipahu--that's about fifteen miles--and then I'd get off at Waipahu and then I had to walk about two miles to the school. A mile and a half I think.

M: You must have been exhausted before you got to school, huh?

B: Well, at the end of the year I was good for nothing. I was worn out and I had one cold after another and I thought, "Mother, I just can't take this any longer." So I stuck it out to the end of the year. The principal was good to me. She was very good to me. (recorder turned off and on again) I went to the head of the department and I said, "I'm not going back to Waipahu." She said, "Well, you know, teachers are supposed to be away at least two years and we want them to be away in some rural school for five years."

They had appointed me to Laupahoehoe. My father and my mother wouldn't let me go. Then they said, "Would they let you go to Maui? It's closer. There's a school there,

a two-room school. You'd be principal and teacher and get a little bit more money." I told them, to me, that was all right, but when I got home--"No, you don't leave Honolulu."

M: How old were you then?

B: Twenty.

M: Twenty and they wouldn't let you leave.

B: Yeh. I couldn't take care of myself alone, I guess. (laughter) No, they were afraid something was going to happen to me. So finally I said, "Well, put me on the waiting list. If I get a job, all right; if not, I'll work at something else. I'll go downtown and work in some kind of a job."

Well, by that time my four brothers were working and they were helping the family. My father used to work two or three days a week now and again, and I used to baby-sit my sisters. After, they all baby-sat for their clothing. Well, then as I say, I taught for those few years and then I took another year off because I had a breakdown again. At the end of the year I didn't want to come back. I still felt not strong enough to come back. I was taking vitamins and whatnot. So I asked for another year and I said, "I'm going to look for a job around here."

One year I took off was a sabbatical, what they call sabbatical, although it was eight years and I had taught I guess about ten or fifteen years. You can have a year off and they gave us a certain percentage of our salary and I got thirty-nine dollars and that was my pin money. They sent it all to me and my brother said, "Oh, poor Margaret, let her have this money." So that's what I had for pin money and my sister-in-law supported me as far as food was concerned and I had a bedroom. She had an extra bedroom.

The second year, then I wanted to take another year off and that year I got nothing but my brothers used to send me ten dollars now and again. By that time they were getting more money and were in different jobs. They had been promoted. So I stayed out that second year, only nine months of it. I came back during the summer.

Then this law was passed that if you were fifty-five, and I was fifty-six then, that you could retire and not teach anymore. In the meantime, I had bought my mother's place--she had finally consented--and my brothers and sisters all got married, so I divided the house into two apartments--one, one-bedroom and the other was two bedrooms. It was a five-bedroom house. We built that house in 1930 and it was a brand new house but the old house was

full of termites and it wasn't worthwhile fixing.

M: Did you just tear it down then?

B: So we tore the old house down. There were just Mother and I and my brother Alwin. He wasn't married yet.

M: Your father had already died?

B: My father died in 1914, um hm. He died in 1914, the same year that my sister died. The one that had pleurisy, you know.

M: Boy, that was a rough year for your mother, huh?

B: Oh yes, it was. It was. But I was already teaching, you see, so I was helping more; and my brothers had all been promoted in their jobs. My brother Frank, my oldest brother, he worked for the gas company. He was just a meter reader when he started but he became manager of the-- oh dear, I can't think of the word now. If someone wanted to put in gas stoves and things like that, they had to first go to him. He had to look up their records to see if they were good payers or if they could afford it or something like that, you see. What do they call that now? I can't think of it. [Credit manager]

M: I wouldn't know.

B: Something like credentials. He had to get their credentials before anybody could put in a gas stove or stuff like that and he was manager of that department. He had four girls under him working--secretaries, you know, and to do the planning, receiving, selling. And he did some selling too but he was in his office all the time, so he got a pretty good job and he's receiving a pension from the gas company even yet. He's eighty-five years old. He says he's going to live to 107. (laughter) I don't know why he chose 107 but that's what he told me the last time I was there.

So I retired in 1947. I was fifty-six years old and all my pension was \$70.24.

M: Umm!

B: But, you see, I had bought the place from Mother and, oh, how I was tight with my money in those years (laughs) that I worked because I wanted to divide it into two apartments and I paid for all of that myself.

M: You mean you rented them both out?

B: No, I lived in one with my mother. My brother got married and I lived in one with my mother. We had two bedrooms in that one and I rented the other one. Then after my mother died, I divided that two bedrooms into a studio and a one-bedroom apartment. My mother had died in 1939 and this was in 1947. So I retired and I lived in the studio and I picked my tenants at either end, one at one side and one at the other, and that's the house that's still there. I sold it to my nephew for twenty thousand dollars in 1954. I came here in 1967.

M: Wow, he had a steal. You could have gotten more than that for it, huh?

B: Yes, I could have gotten thirty thousand but he's a marvelous young man. He's a bachelor. He's forty-three years old and he's not married and he lives at home with his mother. He was looking for a place to live but he wanted a big two-bedroom house because he's got a good job now at the [Honolulu] Iron Works. He was a high-school boy, you know, but he's done so wonderfully well that he's now assistant manager of the supplies and salesmanship department and he gets a very good salary. He's saving like nobody's business because he wants to maybe tear the--he owns that house. And his mother--I sold his mother the other house that we had that was in back in 1945; sold that to her for six thousand dollars. Now she won't sell it for less than thirty thousand. (laughter)

M: Yeh.

B: Now if I had held onto them, why, I'd be worth something today, but I have enough to get along, not luxuriously but comfortably. That's why I bought just a studio. I would have loved an alcove because it has . . . (counter at 260/SIDE 1/2ND TAPE)

END OF INTERVIEW

Re-transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen

NOTE: p. 5 City Directory 1896-97: Manuel de Silva, store clerk, HSP Company, Naalehu.

City Directory 1900: Manuel Silva, luna, Waianae Plantation, Waianae.

FAMILY HISTORY WRITTEN BY ALLEN H. CUNHA, JR.

Manuel Silva came to Hawaii and ran a sailing ship that hauled freight from Waianae to Honolulu. He died at sea. He and his wife had three daughters: Margaret who married John Carreiro; Virginia who married Abel Carreiro, who was John's brother; and Mary who married Francisco F. Branco and who really started the Branco family that we are all part of today.

Mary and Francisco were both born in Funchal, Madeira. They did not meet until they were in Hawaii. Francisco was a carpenter and cabinetmaker and he worked for awhile at the Hutchinson Sugar Company in Naalehu, Hawaii where a number of their children were born. They then moved to Honolulu to live where the rest of the children were born.

The original name of the Brancos was Ferreira. Francisco changed his name to Branco, which means "white" in Portuguese, as there was another man with the same name back in Madeira and there was a fair amount of confusion having two men with the same name. He was going to be drafted into the Portuguese army but paid the Portuguese government fifty English pounds to avoid being drafted. He then left Madeira to move to Hawaii. The selection of the name Branco was a logical one as Francisco had blond hair, blue eyes and was quite fair. His nickname used to be Branco.

Francisco made a bit of a name for himself while he was working at the Hutchinson Sugar Company as a carpenter when he went up to one of the bosses who had whipped a Chinese worker for being lazy and took away the whip from the boss and told him that no one should whip any man. It wasn't long after this incident that he quit the plantation and moved to Honolulu.

Mary and Francisco had twelve children. (Bear in mind they didn't have TV in those days and everyone went to bed early.) Frank was the oldest and he was the credit manager of the Honolulu Gas Company. Charles worked for the U.S. Post Office. Margaret was a schoolteacher and principal. William was a master electrician at Pearl Harbor. Alwin was in insurance. Ella's husband was a machinist at Pearl Harbor. Mary's husband was a vice president for the Hawaiian Telephone Company. Lydia's husband was a senior salesman at the Honolulu Iron Works. Alda's husband was a tax consultant. George, Alvaro and Agnes all died at an early age. We have six generations on the family tree.

There were a total of twenty-five sailing ships that transported Portuguese from Madeira and the Azores to Hawaii during the period 1878 through 1911. Over 16,000 men, women and children came on these ships around Cape Horn on a voyage that took about three months. The fact that the Portuguese brought their wives and children with them to work for the Hawaiian sugar industry is significant as it was an indication

that they came to Hawaii to make new lives for themselves. Most of the other nationalities such as the Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, et cetera, did not bring their women and children when they came to Hawaii. At a much later date they sent for their picture brides who they picked out of a bride book and who they met for the first time at the dock when the brides' boat arrived in Honolulu.

Francisco Ferreira (Branco) arrived on the first ship from Madeira, the sailing ship Priscilla which arrived in Honolulu on September 30, 1878. The passenger list shows F. Ferreira, single, 36, a carpenter, as being passenger #85 on Sheet 2. (I got this information from the State of Hawaii Archives.)

The Manuel da Silva family arrived on the next sailing ship, the Ravenscrag, which arrived from Madeira in Honolulu on August 25, 1879. Listed as head of the family was Manuel da Silva, Naturalidade Do Machico. Proffissao (Profession): Trabalhador (worker). Observacoes Casado com Carolina da Silva; Filhos: Maria 9, Javo 8, Jose 4 and Margarida 2 Annos. (Wife Carolina and four children: Mary, John, Joe and Margaritha.) They are listed on the passenger list as family #173 on Sheet 5.

This was really interesting as it listed two boys, John and Joe, who are not shown on the family tree. Checking with Aunt Margaret, she confirmed that there were two boys all right. John died as a young man in a fire at Waianae and his brother Joe went to California and they did hear from him for awhile, then they did not hear anything further. They heard a rumor that he had been killed in an explosion in a plant where he was working, though Aunt Margaret isn't sure where the plant was located.

The Brancos are also supposed to have some English blood as many generations ago one of the girls got married to an Englishman who was living in Madeira. He worked in a bank and the Portuguese at the time didn't think too highly of one of their "pure, beautiful" girls getting married to a limey. As a result, this part of the family history is a bit sketchy.

Nearly all of the Portuguese that came to Hawaii were Roman Catholics. The Brancos were also, in the beginning here in Hawaii, but they joined the Portuguese Evangelical Church, which later became known as the Pilgrim Church and later merged into the Central Union Church. All of the Brancos were active in the old Pilgram Church and it was sort of a family ritual to see all of the Branco clan gather after services on Sunday mornings in front of the old church at the corner of Punchbowl and Miller streets and have a gab fest. I can still clearly remember those days very well.